



Transportation Fact Sheet

Air and Noise Benefits of Alternative Transportation Systems

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources.
- Enhancing visitor safety and security.
- Protecting plant and animal species.
- Reducing congestion.
- Decreasing pollution.

NPS is committed to being a leader in pursuing strategies that can help make park units more enjoyable, cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable for present and future generations.

For more information, visit nps.gov/transportation

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

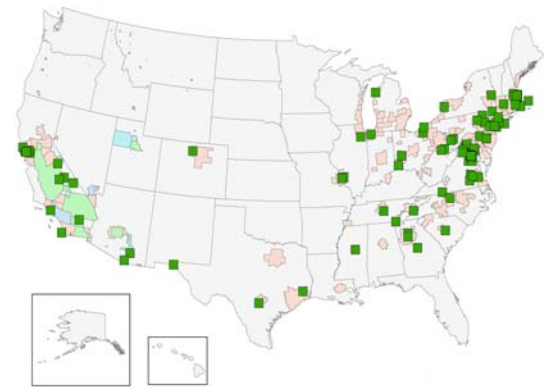
While the 300 million annual visitors to national park units arrive for many reasons, the primary activity of many visitors is viewing natural scenery, vistas, and wildlife. Visitors also come to photograph, hike, breathe fresh air, and surround themselves with natural peace and quiet.

Why are clean air and natural quiet in national parks being threatened?

Growing national park visitation exacerbates traffic congestion and associated air and noise pollution. Pollution also comes from outside sources, including nearby and distant power plants and industries.

Air pollution: reducing visibility and harming resources

Air pollutants have quantifiable effects on visibility, ecology, human health, and the economy of gateway communities surrounding parks. The Clean Air Act intends to ensure that national parks and wildlands have some of the cleanest air in the country. However, 121 parks today are in ozone and particulate regional air quality non-attainment zones, which are areas that do not meet Clean Air Act standards.



Green squares indicate national park units in non-attainment areas.

Noise pollution: silencing the sounds of nature

Cars, buses, and other motorized vehicles are among the most dominant and pervasive sound sources in national park units. Visitors find that many parks contain significant levels of noise and air pollution, and traffic congestion similar to that found on the city streets they left behind. Wildlife can suffer adverse physiological and behavioral changes from intrusive sounds, as most species use their hearing to locate each other, avoid predators, and find food.



Air and noise benefits of alternative transportation systems

Alternative transportation protects air quality and the natural soundscape

NPS has taken positive steps to alleviate the problem of pollution emitted by cars by implementing alternative transportation systems in the form of bus shuttles at many of its parks. Many successes are evident not only in establishing shuttle systems, but also in upgrading bus fleets to achieve greater reductions.



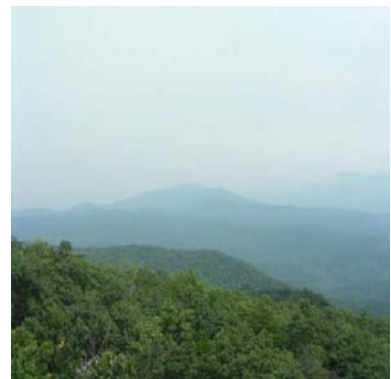
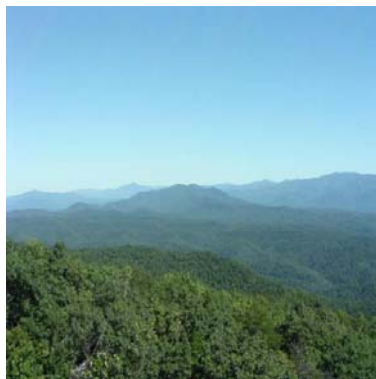
Yosemite Valley Shuttle.

Yosemite National Park in California

At Yosemite, hybrid buses were chosen to replace diesel buses. The Valley Shuttle serves 1,050 passengers per hour, 15 hours per day, year-round. NPS estimates that particulate matter (PM), hydrocarbon (HC), and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions have been cut by 90%, along with a 60% reduction in nitrogen-oxide emissions, while fuel efficiency has increased from 20% to 55%. Noise pollution created by diesel bus acceleration and deceleration has been reduced by as much as 70% with hybrid buses, thereby allowing the visitors to more fully experience all of the sights and sounds of nature.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina

Since 1997, the City of Gatlinburg has run its Gatlinburg Trolley in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, serving the visitor center, a popular campground, and a popular hiking trailhead. Today, the park is working with Gatlinburg, other nearby communities, local, state, and federal government agencies, environmental groups, and local business and tourism interests to develop a variety of transportation and land-use strategies that will help manage regional traffic, reduce air pollution and noise, and improve viewsheds.



Views of Great Smoky Mountains National Park on a clear day and a hazy day. Visibility ranges from 15-100 miles.



Going-to-the-Sun Shuttle.

Glacier National Park in Montana

Glacier National Park visitors can enjoy the spectacular scenery along the Going-to-the-Sun Road by riding on one of the park's 30 environmentally-friendly, bio-diesel passenger shuttle buses. Riders are making a measurable contribution to reducing atmospheric emissions in this pristine environment, reducing the impact on global climate change. Glacier National Park has also partnered with a private operator that runs shuttles for hikers and offers tours on historic and newly-restored and renovated red touring buses that date back to the 1930s.

